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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001492

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP, S/CT
NSC FOR D. WALTON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [PBTS](#) [PTER](#) [ID](#) [MY](#)
SUBJECT: IN ANOTHER FLARE UP, INDONESIANS LASH OUT AT
MALAYSIA OVER ALLEGED CULTURAL MISAPPROPRIATION

REF: A. JAKARTA 974
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 929

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Indonesians have lashed out over the use of a traditional dance in a Malaysian tourist advertisement, claiming that the dance is Balinese in origin. This latest controversy feeds into previous Indonesian allegations of cultural misappropriation by Malaysia. On the positive side, tensions over a maritime border dispute near Borneo seem to have abated in recent weeks. Cooperation continues in other key areas: both sides continue to work together to interdict terrorists in the "tri-border" Sulawesi/Sulu sea region, for example. END SUMMARY.

CONTROVERSY OVER TRADITIONAL DANCE

[1](#)2. (U) The latest controversy between Indonesia and Malaysia involves traditional dance. Many Indonesians are upset at what they see as the misappropriation of a Balinese dance in a Malaysian tourism advertisement shown on the Discovery Channel. The use of the apparent Balinese dance triggered off a cascade of anti-Malaysian comments, including a statement by a lawmaker that "Indonesia must defend its culture by arms if necessary." The controversy also spawned a raft of press articles, as well as postings on social networking sites. A group of Indonesian students also picketed the Malaysian Embassy, with some throwing eggs at the property. The students were peacefully dispersed by police. Student groups sponsored demonstrations in other cities as well.

[1](#)3. (U) The GOI has tried to clam down the situation. The Foreign Ministry spokesman stated: "We are neighbors and problems are to be expected from time to time. We hope that this is just a temporary outburst and will not escalate further." The Malaysian Tourism Ministry has reportedly apologized over the incident, asserting that the company that prepared the advertisement was to blame and, in any case, the ad would be withdrawn.

FEEDING INTO PREVIOUS INDONESIAN ALLEGATIONS

[1](#)4. (U) The latest controversy feeds into previous allegations made by Indonesians of cultural misappropriation. A similar spat erupted last year, for example, over the alleged use of an Indonesian song in a Malaysian tourism ad. The song, called "Rasa Sayang," is a popular Indonesian folk tune. Indonesians have also asserted that in the past Malaysians have tried to claim that Javanese gamelan music is

Malaysian in origin.

15. (U) In the meantime, there continue to be tensions over the treatment of Indonesian migrants working in Malaysia. Various cases of alleged mistreatment have made the press in Indonesia over the past several years, angering Indonesians who feel that somehow their hundreds of thousands of compatriots working in Malaysia are being mistreated en masse. In June, the GOI stopped sending migrants to Malaysia, but lifted that decision after talks with the Malaysian government on protection and other issues made progress.

FRICITION RE BORDER SEEMS TO ABATE

16. (C) On the positive side, tensions between the two countries over a border dispute near eastern Borneo Island seem to have abated in recent weeks. The dispute focuses on maritime border demarcation in the oil and gas rich region of Ambalat, which is located off of Indonesia's East Kalimantan Province ("Kalimantan" is the Indonesian term for Borneo.) The dispute, which is long-standing in origin, flared in June of this year when Malaysian naval vessels reportedly entered the area, prompting Indonesia to augment its military forces in the region (see reftels). In recent conversations, Indonesian officials have told emboffs that the situation in the Ambalat region is "calm" and that Indonesia is focused on ongoing talks with Malaysia about the issue.

CT COOPERATION CONTINUES

17. (C) In addition, counterterrorism cooperation along the Indonesian-Malaysian border region continues. Police in East Kalimantan have told us that they have good connections with their Malaysian opposite numbers and constantly keep in touch

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via the phone and radio. The two sides are helping monitor the so-called "tri-border" region shared with the Philippines which covers the Sulawesi and Sulu Seas and littoral regions.

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